

into their own in the works of the following decade. The slow movement could as well be a *Lied*, with the violin a surrogate soprano. In the middle section, the violin dons a mute and demures. Hints of *Till Eulenspiegel* and the comedic grace of *Rosenkavalier* mark the finale, which gets under way with a dramatic explosion in the violin after a quiet, meditative introduction, almost a transition from the slow movement, by the piano alone.

One of the joys of the *Violin Sonata* is in experiencing the full-fledged style of Strauss articulated by only two instruments. Strauss in his mature period is an almost exclusively symphonic and operatic composer; he all but abandoned chamber music from this point on, apart from the *Lied*; the beautiful string sextet in *Capriccio*, for example, is a reminiscence of the idea of chamber music, a *Bühnenmusik* both figuratively and literally: a staged gesture back to a lost world, not a direct engagement with the genre. There are times in the *Violin Sonata* when we feel we are in the midst of a symphonic poem, but the symphonic poem has been moved from its native arena to the smaller confines of the piano and violin duo and the chamber music salon. It might be a little like encountering Kawhi Leonard and LeBron James playing one-on-one at the Rec Center playground: one does a double-take. The content, the intensity, are the same, but the scale has changed dramatically.

-Charles Curtis

Pianist **REIKO UCHIDA** enjoys an active career as a soloist and chamber musician. She performs regularly throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, in venues including Suntory Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, and the White House. First prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition and Zinetti International Competition, she has appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, and the Princeton Symphony, among others. She made her New York solo debut in 2001 at Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and Spoleto Music Festivals; as guest artist with Camera Lucida, American Chamber Players, and the Borromeo, Talich, Daedalus, St. Lawrence, and Tokyo String Quartets; and in recital with Jennifer Koh, Thomas Meglioranza, Anne Akiko Meyers, Sharon Robinson, and Jaime Laredo. Her recording with Jennifer Koh, “String Poetic” was nominated for a Grammy Award. She is a past member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two. As a youngster, she performed on Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show. Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, a Master’s degree from the Mannes College of Music, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School. She studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell, Margo Garrett, and Sophia Rosoff. She has taught at the Brevard Music Center, and is currently an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

Violinist **JEFF THAYER** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony. Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara), and concertmaster of the Canton (OH) Symphony Orchestra. He is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division. His teachers include William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, Dorothy DeLay, and James Lyon. He has appeared as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Jupiter Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School Festival Orchestra, the Spartanburg Philharmonic, the Cleveland Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, the Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. He attended Keshet Eilon (Israel), Ernen Musikdorf (Switzerland), Music Academy of the West, Aspen, New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Quartet Program, and as the 1992 Pennsylvania Governor Scholar, Interlochen Arts Camp. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

Anthony Burr has worked across a broad spectrum of the contemporary musical landscape as clarinetist, composer and producer. Recent albums include a recording of Morton Feldman’s *Clarinet and String Quartet* and *The Long Exhale*, a duo with pianist Anthony Pateras, that was selected as one of the top 10 modern classical releases of 2016 by *The Wire* magazine. Upcoming releases include the premiere recording of Alvin Lucier’s *So You...* (Hermes, Orpheus, Eurydice), a disc of chamber music by Lucier and Feldman and an archive of duo material created with Icelandic bassist/composer Skuli Sverrisson. He is associate Professor of Music at UCSD.

Taiwanese-American violist **CHE-YEN CHEN** is the newly appointed Professor of Viola at the University of California, Los Angeles Herb Alpert School of Music. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning First-Prize in the 2003 Primrose Competition and “President Prize” in the Lionel Tertis Competition, Chen has been described by San Diego Union Tribune as an artist whose “most impressive aspect of his playing was his ability to find not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.” Having served as the principal violist of the San Diego Symphony for eight seasons, he is the principal violist of the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, and has appeared as guest principal violist with Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra. A former member of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Two and participant of the Marlboro Music Festival, he is also a member of Camera Lucida, and The Myriad Trio. Chen is currently on faculty at USC Thornton School of Music, and has given master-classes in major conservatories and universities across North America and Asia. In August 2013, the Formosa Quartet inaugurated their annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Modeled after American summer festivals such as Ravinia, Taos, Marlboro, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning. It represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians; to champion Taiwanese and Chinese music; and to bring first-rate chamber music to Taiwanese audiences.

camera lucida

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
Monday, December 9th, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Sonatine for Violin and Viola, Op. 226 (1941) Darius Milhaud
(1892-1974)

Décidé – Lent – Vif (Fugue)

Hommage à R. Sch. Op. 15/d (1990) György Kurtág
(b. 1926)

1. Merkwürdige Pirouetten des Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler - Vivo
2. E.: Der Begrenzte Kreis... /- Molto semplice, piano e legato
3. ...und Wieder Zuckt es Schmerzlich F. um die Lippen... - Feroce, agitato
4. Felhövalék, mársütanap... (Töredék-Töredék) / Je fus de l’ombre, et le soleil est de retour... (Fragment-Fragment) - Calmo, scorrevole
5. In der Nacht - Presto
6. Abschied (Meister Raro entdeckt Guillaume de Machaut) - Adagio, poco andante

Märchenerzählungen, Op. 132 (1853) Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

1. Lebhaft, nicht zu schnell
2. Lebhaft, und sehr markiert
3. Ruhiges tempo, mit zartem Ausdruck
4. Lebhaft, sehr markiert

intermission

Violin Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 18 (1887-1888) Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

1. Allegro, ma non troppo
2. Improvisation: Andante cantabile
3. Finale: Andante - Allegro

Jeff Thayer, violin
Che-Yen Chen, viola
Anthony Burr, clarinet
Reiko Uchida, piano

Charles Curtis is on leave until January 2020

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Milhaud: **Sonatina for Violin and Viola, Op. 226**

Milhaud is often lumped together with a group of early 20th century French composers known as “*les Six*”. The group formed in Paris towards the end of the First World War in orbit around the figures of Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau—two iconoclasts. Cocteau was attracted to Satie’s idiosyncratic brand, seeming to carve a completely separate path from the late-Romantic legacy of Wagner, as well as the Impressionism of Debussy, and Stravinsky’s primitivism neo-Classicism. Despite this, the group was remarkably heterogeneous in its styles and approaches. As Milhaud himself relayed, a French music critic “... chose six names absolutely arbitrarily, those of Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc, Tailleferre and me simply because we knew each other and we were pals and appeared on the same musical programmes, no matter if our temperaments and personalities weren’t at all the same! Auric and Poulenc followed ideas of Cocteau, Honegger followed German Romanticism, and myself, Mediterranean lyricism!”

The word “neo-Classical”, often applied to Milhaud, can either distort or neglect different aspects of his musical style. In the case of the Sonatina for Violin and Viola, the term neo-Baroque might be more appropriate. In particular, the musical texture, with its clear but intricate two-part polyphony, rhythmic drive, lyricism, and organic structure, seems to invite comparison to Bach’s two-part inventions (Milhaud wrote two other similar duo-sonatinas for violin and cello and viola and cello). The fugal final movement in particular seems to invoke Bach. However, the influence of Satie can also perhaps be heard in the music’s unique harmonic colors, vividly sparse, and a subtly haunting, faintly melancholic undercurrent.

Miluad’s music mostly flows like a mesmerising stream of consciousness, punctuated occasionally by diversions, distractions, and interruptions. These unexpected twists often occur to great effect towards the ends of movements. Following Bach, Milhad ends the fugue with a flourishing chordal gesture, breaking the strict two-part polyphony. Alternatively, the somber second movement becomes subtly agitated before suddenly seeming to run out of energy, coming to a halt in mid-phrase, and then proceeding in a halting, dumbstruck fashion towards a resolution.

Kurtág: **Hommage a R. Sch**

Kurtág’s pays homage to Schumann not only through the use of an unusual trio of instruments (piano, viola, and clarinet—featured in Schumann’s Op. 132 *Märchenerzählungen*), and through the arrangement of a set of highly miniaturized “character pieces”, but also through a richly programmatic musical narrative. Through their titles and affect each of the movements makes reference to Schumann’s creative life, often through personae.

The manic-depressive character of Johannes Kreisler was a fictional composer created by E.T.A. Hoffmann, based partly on himself, but who Schumann later “adopted” in his Op. 16 *Kreisleriana*, a suite of character pieces for piano. Schumann wrote *Kreisleriana* while wooing his future wife, Clara, and embedded it with easter eggs in the form of melodies derived from his letters with Clara. However, Clara was understandably disturbed by work’s extreme emotional volatility, mixing irrational, violent outbursts with extreme tenderness and poetry, which Kurtag seems to emulate in the form of “snapshots” in time, brief gestures, exquisitely fleeting harmonies which barely register before they disappear.

Kreisleriana seems to capture Schumann’s romantic infatuation with disturbing intensity. Kurtág’s miniaturization seems to capture a kind of instantaneous snapshot of Kreisler’s character, balanced on a knife’s edge. The second and third movements reference Schumann’s own alter-egos of Eusebius and Florestan, respectively. The melancholic, brooding, passive Eusebius and the fecund, creative, aggressive Florestan reflect not only the divisions within Kreisler’s character, but also within Schumann himself.

Kurtág employs a lopsided structure in the form of an intensely morbid final movement which is longer than the preceding five movements combined. The movement’s ttle refers to Schumann’s fictional character of Master Raro, the persona embodying Schumann’s creativity and insight, as well as to the very real character of Guillaume de Machaut, the late-Medieval composer. Machaut was virtually unknown in Schumann’s time; however, Kurtág has been intensely interested in Machaut, who is now regarded as a pioneer of polyphony and an immensely important composer. By invoking Machaut as he does, Kurtág references Schumann’s own interest in ancient music. However, Kurtág also

pays homage to both Machaut and Schumann through the use of a recurring rhythmic cell (isorhythms): the morbid, funerary tone of the recurring isorhythm iteratively builds in intensity in a way that mirrors Schumann’s *Märchenerzählungen*. The music builds slowly towards an ominous piano cluster-chord, which is hauntingly harmonized by the clarinet and viola, followed by a partial, slowed iteration of the opening isorhythm, terminated by the clarinetist percussively palming the inside of the piano.

Schumann: **Märchenerzählungen, Op. 132**

Schumann’s *Märchenerzählungen* (Fairy tales), follow in the tradition of “character pieces”, which so embodied Schumann’s vivid imagination as a composer. However, unlike some of his earlier sets, the Märchenerzählungen are non-programmatic: apart from the title, any narrative is left to the listener’s imagination.

However, Schumann’s music, inherently rich in character, takes on a narrative quality through an intriguing approach to form: virtually the entirety of each movement is derived from a single call-and-response melodic phrase (two melodies with different characters; the first rising, the second falling). This “kernel” functions like the protagonist of a novel, serving as the frame of reference from which the listener perceives the narrative. Schumann’s kernel is simply reiterated with embellishment, added commentary, or in different contexts. The romping second movement, sets the melody to endlessly captivating harmonic shifts, and features an extremely bizarre evaded cadence towards the end of the movement, occurring in a kind of false recapitulation of the opening.

The three instruments, though having very different timbres, blend together to form a single musical character. Phrases are often divided between the instruments in creative and expressive ways: in the slow, lyrical third movement, marked “Ruhiges tempo mit zartem Ausdruck” (Calm tempo with delicate expression), is juxtaposes childlike innocence with deep melancholy in a uniquely Schumannesque way, perhaps paying homage to Schumann’s alter-egos of Florestan and Eusebius (one creative and outgoing, the other withdrawn and sensitive). Particularly noteworthy, is the way Schumann takes advantage of the shared range between the clarinet and viola to transition from one to the other over sustained melodic notes, in the middle of a phrase. Conversely, Schumann makes use of the viola’s different colors by giving the viola different phrases in different registers. In the final movement, Schumann reverses the polarity of the kernel: the falling melody occurs first, and is followed by the rising melody, fundamentally altering its character, signalling a kind of triumph or resolution.

Serendipitously, the kernel of Märchenerzählungen makes for a poignant allegory of Schumann himself: not only does it recall Schumann’s playful fondness for fictional personae in literature while capturing the thriving vitality of his own his inner child; but the fact that this music was written shortly before the composer’s final mental breakdown and suicide attempt makes for a deeply unsettling contrast to the music’s effortless lightheartedness and primal, childlike joy.

-Amir Moheimani

Richard Strauss: **Violin Sonata in E-flat major, Opus 18**

Richard Strauss is the product -- literally -- of the “marriage” between the economic aspirations of the classical music scene in Germany and the wealthy merchant class emerging in the decades following industrialization. Strauss’ father, born illegitimate and in poverty, worked his way up to Principal Horn in the court orchestra of King Ludwig of Bavaria; his mother was a daughter of the Bavarian beer dynast Georg Pschorr. The father, called “the Joachim of the Horn” by von Bülow for his unparalleled skill and mellifluous sound, was a reactionary in musical matters, detesting Wagner both as a man and a composer; in fact, following Wagner’s death in 1883, when Hermann Levi asked the court orchestra to rise to their feet in his memory, Franz Strauss was the only orchestra member to remain seated. Josephina, Richard Strauss’ mother, led a retiring life marked by depression and insecurity, eventually submitting to the torturous treatments of nineteenth-century psychiatric institutions.

We can easily imagine, then, the neurotic, Ur-German, music-obsessed household in which Strauss grew up, and the pressures and expectations levied on the young Richard. And he did not disappoint. Music as the ticket to social advancement was not a new idea;

certainly Beethoven rode about as far as one could on that ticket. But Strauss, starting the journey already at a point of bourgeois respectability and considerable wealth, could be seen as engaged in a mission of preservation, of maintaining and bolstering both his own status, and by extension, the viability of music itself as a stanchion of the moral, aesthetic, and cultural good. Strauss seems to have understood this situation intuitively, and his oeuvre stands as a brilliant affirmation of the German status quo, expressed through its very own, proprietary cultural form, classical music. Works like the *Sinfonia Domestica*, *Ein Heldenleben*, or the *Alpensinfonie*, address these matters explicitly, glorifying aspects of German lifestyle and aspiration; and even in Strauss’ brief expressionist period, he seems to want to temporarily ratify what must have appeared to him a legitimate outgrowth of German culture - particularly in literature - by participating in that new trend with his two experimental operas, *Elektra* and *Salomé*.

He stands at the point at which a term like “classical music” begins to make sense: he is one of the first to cast music composition as the spinning out of cultural fantasies, mostly retrospective in nature. Stravinsky referred to Strauss’ post-expressionist period - inaugurated with his ultimate success story, *Der Rosenkavalier* - as “time-travelling.” And certainly he was not being catty, the neo-classicism and neo-baroque-ism of Stravinsky’s own middle period following shortly thereafter. That the cultural fantasy which Strauss spins out is that of German *Bürgerlichkeit* makes it no less a fantasy. The early E-flat major *Horn Concerto*, written for his father, may be the first example of his ongoing desire to please, expressing the dream of reconciliation with his distinguished but demanding and truculent father. That he would have been claimed by the Nazis, for a time, evidently without either his approval or over his objections, seems not so surprising. After 1935, when he was removed from his post as president of the *Reichsmusikkammer* due to his ongoing relationship with and support for Stefan Zweig, he retreated into a life of seclusion, tolerated by the regime but kept under surveillance. Little by little the dream of reconciliation seems to be aimed at music itself, the dream of finding a welcoming and well-appointed home in the presence of Mozart, which the D-major *Oboe Concerto* of 1945 and the opera *Capriccio* would appear to poignantly and lovingly construct. In his day, Strauss was considered perhaps the pre-eminent conductor of Mozart’s symphonies and operas. With his final, justly celebrated orchestral songs on texts of Eichendorff and Hesse, the fantasy extends to Strauss’ own works, as if he was embracing Music as a heavenly realm to which his very own musical production would gain him admittance. In the last of these *Last Songs*, “*Im Abendrot*” , at the point when the voice intones its salutation of death, “*Ist dies etwa der Tod?*”, Strauss’ own “transfiguration” motive from *Death and Transfiguration* emerges from the depths of the strings, in the “unreal” tonality of C-flat major, working its way then through a tortuous and many-chambered passageway via B-flat major, E-flat minor, D major, F major, A-flat major, D minor and finally C-flat major again, to the heavenly resting-place of E-flat major. Evidently Strauss felt he needed to present the talisman of his own youthful theme at the portal.

His few works of chamber music almost all date to the 1880’s, when Strauss was putting the finishing touches on his immense compositional craft. The significant chamber works are the *Cello Sonata, opus 6*, the *Piano Quartet, opus 13*, and the *Violin Sonata, opus 18*. The *Violin Sonata*, however, is the only one that fully reflects the ease of composition and originality of the mature Strauss. It directly precedes the symphonic poems *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration*, works that established Strauss’ fame as a mere twenty-five-year-old. One could regard the *Violin Sonata* as the last composition of his preparatory phase, and simultaneously as the first work of his maturity.

The opening piano chords would seem to evoke a brass section, gleaming and punctuated with the appropriate dotted rhythms of countless E-flat major horn fanfares. Dense, convoluted melodic strains mark the violin writing, layered with a piano part that favors the middle register, and achieving a sonority near to the thickness and opacity of Strauss’ early orchestral sound. The rapid rate of modulation in certain sections, in which Strauss emulates Wagner, adds to the sense of a ripeness and complexity verging on the decadent. Strauss is laying out his own unique principles of counterpoint, the co-existence of multiple, equally-important individual lines flowing around and on top of each other; even individual voices, through the characteristically Straussian deployment of very wide melodic leaps (as in the theme of *Heldenleben*), seem to be composites of more than one linear thread. These elements are present in incipient form in the *Violin Sonata*, and come